

First published in *Thema*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Autumn 2011. Copyright 2011 by Tetman Callis, save for the lyrics of "Twa Corbies," which were first published in 1912 by The Bodley Head in John Lane's *Ballads Weird and Wonderful*.

Lawn

He'll be bringing along his music when he comes. Before you know it, there he'll be on your lawn—

my, but you have a big lawn, mowed like a putting green, cleverly decorated with bushes and trees—

and he'll be sitting there, autoharp in his lap, all umpity-odd strings in tune, music spread in front of him on the damp grass, and he will play and he will sing. He'll play and sing "Summertime Dream."

"Protocol."

"The House You Live In." These are the songs he knows.

Wait—he knows "Greensleeves." That will go well on a lawn, especially a damp one with bushes and trees. He'll play and sing "Greensleeves" and the others until he wears you out. You'll send your butler out for new songs. The butler will do as butlers do and bring him "Twa Corbies."

As I was walking all alane

I heard twa corbies macking mane

Not only will he play and sing, he'll dance. He'll bring his Doctor Bartleby's Portable Music Box, loaded with Everyone's All-Time Favorite Dance Tracks. And the big Special Value Add-On Speakers, with their trademarked Clear & Ringing Upper Register Tones and special patented Baseball Bat Bottom End.

For you, only the best.

The tane unto the tither did say-oh

O, whar sall we gang and dine the day-oh?

He'll turn on the music box and dance across your lawn. You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Baby.

In behint yon auld fail dyke

I wot there lies a new-slain knight

He'll dance up onto your broad front porch in his damp-bottomed shoes, ring your bell straight out of a tight ice-skater's pirouette. Or maybe a loose ballerino's. You don't know how long this could go on. You don't know how fast an autoharp can sag out of tune.

And naebody kens that he lies there-oh

But his hawk and his hound and his lady fair-oh

But he can tune it! You'll see him up nights on your lawn with his little tuner tool (a screwdriver-looking red-handled thing (with a neck bending at the right angle (near the socket that fits over those little tuning pegs (that the ends of the strings wrap around.))))

All those odd strings will take time. Finding middle C could be a problem.

His hound is to the hunting gane

His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame

This could go on all night. But don't fret! He'll be the first to tell you he's a civilized man. No music boxes on front lawns at night for him, no ma'am. Doesn't matter how big those lawns are. So if you want to catch him dancing, you'll have to do it in the day-oh. You can watch from your parlour wind-oh. He knows all kinds of dances: the Hookah-Too, the Elevator, the Tango-for-One, the Strap-Me-Down, the Petty Four, the Muddy Puppy. He can even do the Second Lieutenant.

You call it, he can do it.

His lady's taken anither mate-oh

So we may mack our dinner sweet-oh

You can sit in your parlour and call dances to him out the window. Your best bet is to call between songs. There will be a three-to-five-second gap of near-silence between each song, birds chittering in the middle distance.

Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane

And I'll pike out his bonny blue e'en

Be fast!

Wi' many a lock o' his gowden hair-oh

We'll theek our nest when it grows bare-oh

Or you can send the butler out with your requests written on little slips of linen paper, folded in half and arranged on a silver tea-tray. He'll reach out and pick them off while he pirouettes.

Or ballerinos.

Mony a one for him maks mane

But nane sall ken whar he is gane

After that, just sit back and enjoy. On days when you're feeling a touch daring, you can shadow-dance with him across your parlour floor as he's whirling dervishly outside, trampling your gargantuan lawn.

O'er his white banes, when they are bare-oh

The wind sall blaw for evermair-oh.